

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An apparatus for receiving a variety of different types of consumer trash in high traffic public areas and compacting the received trash together into a compacted mass, comprising:

a housing, said housing including a top and a side wall connected to said top,

5 said housing having an upper portion, a lower portion disposed beneath said upper portion, and an intermediate portion disposed between said upper portion and said lower portion;

a trash opening defined through said top;

a frame disposed within said housing;

10 a trash by-pass chute disposed within said housing and having an entrance aligned generally with said trash opening, said by-pass chute having an exit disposed to empty into said lower portion of said housing;

a compacting mechanism carried by said frame and including a platen, said compacting mechanism being configured for moving said platen through a compaction

15 stroke to apply compacting pressure to trash contents located in said lower portion of said housing during at least a portion of said compaction stroke;

a hatch disposed to control physical access through said trash by-pass chute, said hatch being configured to selectively pivot between a closed orientation substantially blocking access through said trash by-pass chute and an open orientation

20 substantially permitting access through said trash by-pass chute;

a hatch stop disposed at said entrance of said trash by-pass chute;

an actuator mechanism connected to said hatch stop, said actuator mechanism being configured to selectively actuate said hatch stop to hold said hatch in said closed orientation with respect to said trash by-pass chute; and

25        said actuator mechanism including a cable spool rotatably mounted to said frame, a cable having one end connected to said spool and an opposite end connected to said hatch stop.

2. An apparatus as in claim 1, wherein:

      said compacting mechanism including a selectively variable length ram; and

      said actuator mechanism including a cam follower connected to said spool so as to rotate when said spool rotates, said cam follower being rotatably mounted to said  
5        frame and configured and disposed to be rotated by selective engagement with said ram.

3. An apparatus as in claim 2, wherein:

      said cam follower being automatically disposed to a position during operation of said compacting mechanism such that said actuator mechanism actuates said hatch stop to said closed orientation whereby said hatch is substantially blocking access  
5        through said trash by-pass chute.

4. An apparatus as in claim 3, wherein said actuator mechanism includes at least one spring connected so as to bias said hatch stop in a position where said hatch is disposed in said closed orientation.

5. An apparatus as in claim 1, wherein said hatch defines a front section and an adjacent section contiguous with said front section, said front section residing in a plane that forms an obtuse angle with the plane of said adjacent section, said front section having a free edge pointing toward said exit of said trash bypass chute.

6. An apparatus as in claim 1, wherein said compacting mechanism includes an extendable member having a pair of opposed ends, said platen defining a first portion connected to one said end of said extendable member, said platen defining a pivotable portion pivotally connected to said first portion of said platen; and

5        wherein said pivotable portion of said platen defines a front section and an adjacent section contiguous with said front section, said front section residing in a plane that forms an obtuse angle with the plane of said adjacent section, said front section having a free edge pointing away from said exit of said trash bypass chute.

7. An apparatus as in claim 6, wherein said compacting mechanism is configured for moving said platen through a retraction stroke to reposition said platen away from said lower portion of said housing during at least a portion of said retraction stroke and said compacting mechanism is further configured so that said pivotable portion of said platen

5        pivots away from said top of said housing during at least a portion of said retraction stroke.

8. An apparatus as in claim 1, wherein said compacting mechanism being configured for moving said platen through a retraction stroke to reposition said platen away from said lower portion of said housing during at least a portion of said retraction stroke and said platen is configured to by-pass said trash by-pass chute during at least a portion of

5        said retraction stroke.

9. An apparatus as in claim 1, further comprising:

a controller disposed within said housing; and

a non-contact magnetic sensor disposed within said housing and configured for detecting an event that includes more than slight movement of said hatch with respect

5 to said entrance of said by-pass chute, said sensor being connected to said controller and configured to generate a signal that is transmitted to said controller upon detection of said event, said controller being configured to activate said compacting mechanism after receiving from said sensor, signals that indicate the occurrence of a predetermined number of events.

10. An apparatus as in claim 1, further comprising:

a controller disposed within said housing; and

a non-contact magnetic sensor disposed within said housing and configured for detecting during each compaction stroke of said platen, an event that includes

5 movement of said platen through a compaction stroke that is less than a predetermined minimum distance, said sensor being connected to said controller, said controller being configured to refrain from activating said compacting mechanism after detection of such event.

11. An apparatus as in claim 10, further comprising:

a sensor mount, said sensor mount carrying said non-contact magnetic sensor and connected to said frame, said sensor mount being configured for selective positioning along said frame.

12. An apparatus as in claim 1, further comprising:

a controller disposed within said housing;

an access opening defined through said lower portion of said housing;

a door defining a section of said lower portion of said housing and configured to

5 selectively open and close said access opening;

a power source connected to said compacting mechanism for providing power to operate said compacting mechanism; and

a switch connected between said power source and said compacting mechanism and configured and disposed to detect at least when said door is disposed to close said

10 access opening.

13. An apparatus as in claim 12, wherein said switch is configured so that upon failing to detect that said door is disposed to close said access opening, said switch operates to disconnect said power source from said compacting mechanism.

14. An apparatus for receiving a variety of different types of consumer trash in high traffic public areas and compacting the received trash together into a compacted mass, comprising:

a housing defining an interior surface and an exterior surface facing opposite

5 said interior surface, said housing including a top extending generally horizontally and a side wall connected to said top and extending generally vertically;

a trash opening defined through said housing; and

a display panel defined in said top and including characters composing an image, said characters being embedded in said top with said image visible by viewers of said

10 exterior surface of said housing.

15. An apparatus for receiving a variety of different types of consumer trash in high traffic public areas and compacting the received trash together into a compacted mass, comprising:

a housing defining an interior surface and an exterior surface facing opposite

5 said interior surface, said housing including a top extending generally horizontally and a side wall connected to said top and extending generally vertically;

a trash opening defined through said housing; and

a display panel defined in said side wall and including characters composing an image, said characters being embedded in said side wall with said image visible by

10 viewers of said exterior surface of said housing.

16. A method of molding a display panel as part of a molded item wherein the display panel includes characters composing a desired image and the characters are embedded in the display panel, comprising:

providing a mold with a substrate shaped according to the desired shape of the

5 display panel;

providing a stencil that outlines the characters forming the desired image;

disposing the stencil against the substrate;

applying gel coat to cover the characters outlined by the stencil;

allowing the applied gel coat to set;

10 removing the stencil;

applying another coat of gel coat to the mold and to cover the gel coat that has been set;

allowing the last coat of gel coat to set and form the molded item; and

removing the molded item from the mold.

17. A method as in claim 16, wherein:

a mold release agent is applied to said substrate before disposing the stencil against the substrate; and

the stencil is a self-adhesive stencil.